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DEPARTMENT FOR INR/R/MR, EAP/RSP/TC, EAP/PA, EAP/PD -
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TAGS: [OPRC](#) [KMDR](#) [KPAO](#) [TW](#)

SUBJECT: MEDIA REACTION: CROSS-STRAIT RELATIONS

1. Summary: As Taipei dailies continued to cover KMT Chairman Lien Chan's China trip May 2, the focus has moved to President Chen Shui-bian's remarks Sunday en route to the Marshall Islands made with regard to PFP Chairman James Soong's upcoming visit to China. The front-page stories of the centrist "China Times" and the pro-unification "United Daily News" and a page-two news story of the pro-independence "Liberty Times," Taiwan's biggest daily, all reported that Chen has asked Soong to act as his messenger and deliver certain messages to Chinese leaders. Several newspapers focused on the part of Chen's remarks about the United States' attitude toward Lien's trip. The pro-independence "Taiwan Daily" ran a banner headline on its front page that read: "Bian: United States criticizes Lien Chan's China trip [as an attempt to] divide Taiwan." The "United Daily News" also carried a news story on page four that said: "Bian: United States placed pressure [prior to Lien's China trip]; Lien Chan acted within the boundary and did not cross the line." Another news story on page four of the "United Daily News" also quoted a high-ranking DPP official as saying that Washington has indeed helped the Taipei government to stabilize Taiwan's political situation by urging Beijing to reach out to the elected leaders of Taiwan.

2. In terms of editorials and commentaries, a "Liberty Times" editorial continued its strong criticism against Lien's China trip, saying the trip will turn into a disastrous journey for Taiwan. A "China Times" editorial commented on Chen's remarks prior to his departure for the Marshall Islands, noting that Chen can treat the opposition leaders' trip to China as an opportunity that might finally lead to a dialogue between the DPP and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP). A "United Daily News" commentary and a "China Times" news analysis discussed the role of the United States behind Lien's trip. The "United Daily News" commentary said Washington is very concerned about the fact that the KMT and CCP started talks without Washington. The "China Times" news analysis noted that President Chen sought to regain his leadership of cross-strait issues by dragging Washington into the game. End summary.

A) "Lien Chan's China Trip Must Be Stopped from Turning into a Disastrous Journey for Taiwan"

The pro-independence "Liberty Times" [circulation: 800,000] editorialized (5/2):

"Taiwan is facing a life-and-death crisis in the face of China's attempt to annex the island. [KMT Chairman] Lien Chan's China trip, on the other hand, raises the island's internal struggles to the level of conflicts between Taiwan and its enemy. Lien's attempt is to join hands with the rival country to attack his own government and political competitors. Lien's China trip took place at the time of the 30th anniversary of Saigon's fall into the hands of the Communist Party. As a result, Taiwan people must strive to stop the trip from turning into a tragedy for Taiwan."

B) "President Chen Should Stand Firm on His Strategic Commanding Elevation"

The centrist, pro-status quo "China Times" [circulation: 600,000] commented in an editorial (5/2):

"Prior to his departure for a visit to Taiwan's allies in the South Pacific, President Chen chose to make an initial response to [KMT Chairman] Lien Chan's China's trip. If Chen's remarks will become his keynote response to the meeting between Lien and [Chinese President] Hu Jintao and even to the future meeting between [PFP Chairman] James Soong and Hu, we then may say that Chen has already taken control of the strategic commanding elevation that he should be standing on [as a president]."

"At the current stage, both Chen and his party should clearly sort out the current situation. Their real rival is neither the KMT or the PFP but the Chinese

Communist Party in Beijing. Yes, the anticipated effects of China's Anti-Secession Law, under Beijing's consistent efforts, have moved toward a direction that is favorable for China. As Taiwan's ruling party, the DPP must not just proactively 'smear' the opposition parties. If viewed from a different perspective, why cannot the DPP treat the opposition leaders' China trips as an 'opportunity?' Maybe the necessary process for cross-Straits dialogue should start from the KMT, then PFP, and followed by the DPP. One must be aware that the future dialogue between the DPP, Taiwan's ruling party, and the Chinese Communist Party will be the real show. Before that really happens, the ruling party should spend its efforts in communicating with the deep Green supports.. Likewise, Beijing also needs time to get to know the DPP better, just like now it has already changed its previously stereotyped impression about the KMT. It is definitely a must for the DPP to create a non-hostile atmosphere if it wants to sit down and talk with Beijing. "

C) "KMT and CCP Talk without Washington; the United States Is Concerned"

Washington correspondent Vincent Chang noted in the "Observation from Washington" column of the pro-unification "United Daily News" [circulation: 600,000] (5/1):

". Since Washington has failed to pay attention to the possible impact that exchanges between the KMT and CCP might produce in the beginning and as a result, failed to proactively contact the KMT, it will naturally fall into a passive position as an observer when the formal KMT-CCP talks began. Washington is now in a rare and embarrassing position because it has no part in the cross-Straits interaction. .

"Over the past few years, the statement that 'the shortest distance from Beijing to Taipei is to go through Washington' has become an unspoken but widely known consensus for many cross-Straits relations specialists and even the governments on both sides of the Taiwan Strait. . But given the successful meeting between leaders of the KMT and CCP, plus the meeting between James Soong and Chinese President Hu Jintao that will soon take place, Beijing seems to have silently gotten rid of Washington, the 'leverage' mechanism, and made use of its interaction with Taiwan's opposition parties to pass over President Chen Shui-bian and gradually take over the leading role in the cross-Straits issues, which was originally controlled by Washington. Beijing seems to have managed to work on its own to develop a new road to Taipei, without bothering to go through Washington.

"Such a development has astounded Washington. Therefore, after Lien set foot in China, Washington has repeatedly urged Beijing to communicate with 'President Chen and his Cabinet' after its contact with Taiwan's opposition leaders. Washington also began to emphasize the justified role of the Chen Shui-bian administration in the hope that Beijing and the KMT and PFP, to a certain extent, will not overplay [the game] with the Chen Shui-bian administration and thereby try to take back its territory with regard to the cross-Straits issues."

D) "Bian Strives to Save His Leading Role in Cross-Straits Issues by Dragging the United States into the Game"

Journalist Lin Shu-ling said in the centrist, pro-status quo "China Times" [circulation: 600,000] (5/2):

". Sources said President Chen did not consult with the high-ranking officials in the Cabinet or the DPP before he made the remarks about [KMT Chairman] Lien Chan's trip to China [prior to his departure to South Pacific Sunday]. Only a few core staff within the Presidential Office joined in drafting Chen's remarks, and the whole policy-making process was very hasty. The reason was because the United States was very concerned that the development of cross-Straits relations would get out of its control following Lien's trip to China and that it does not want to see China leading the development of cross-Straits ties. Even though Chen mentioned Lien, Soong and arms sales in his remarks Sunday, his only purpose was to demonstrate his ability to control the cross-Straits issue and to stabilize the whole situation together with the United States.

"The United States has its global strategic need to lead the development of cross-Straits issues, and U.S. interests match those of the Chen Shui-bian administration. When the United States saw from the

Lien-Hu meeting China's attempt to talk with Taiwan's opposition parties in order to isolate the Chen Shui-bian administration and get rid of the United States, Washington started Saturday to urge Beijing to engage in a dialogue with the Chen administration. Washington's move and the card played by Chen can be viewed as concerted attacks aiming at the same target.

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